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SUBJECT: AFRICA: TURKEY'S NEXT FRONTIER?

REF: A. ANKARA 489

[1](#)B. ANKARA 148

Classified By: POLCOUNS Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: Like China and India, Turkey has joined the rush to forge relations with sub-Saharan Africa. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has raised Turkey's political profile since coming to power in 2002 -- declaring 2005 the "Year of Africa" and announcing plans to open 10 new Sub-Saharan diplomatic missions in 2008. Turkey's primary interests in the region are economic, both as a market for Turkish goods and services and a potential energy source. Although GOT humanitarian assistance and multinational peacekeeping contributions remain low by international standards, Africa figures more prominently in private-sector and non-governmental contributions. Benevolence aside, Turkey's newfound interest in Africa plays a key role in its efforts to gain international support for its 2009 UNSC bid and other multinational leadership positions. End Summary and Comment.

[1](#)2. (C) Although many Turkish neo-Ottomanists claim historic ties with Africa dating back centuries, Turkey's interest on the continent lies primarily in the Maghreb. North Africa constitutes the lion's share of regional trade (Turkey launched its immensely successful international construction industry through contracts signed with Libya in the seventies) and some of Turkey's oldest diplomatic relationships. Bilateral engagement with sub-Saharan Africa, however, is relatively nascent. MFA Africa Section Chief Aykut Kumbaroglu explained the MFA first developed a broader Africa policy in 1998. The GOT however, did not engage in earnest until the AKP came to power in 2002. Under AKP's "strategic depth" foreign policy, the GOT has broadened Turkey's traditionally Eurocentric focus and begun an aggressive campaign aimed at increasing Turkey's influence through its greater neighborhood, including Africa. This is the first of two cables examining Turkey's growing ties to the region.

Diplomatic Footprint

[1](#)3. (SBU) Turkey opened its first sub-Saharan embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1926 and currently has diplomatic representation in Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Africa, Senegal, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie was the first high-level African visitor to Turkey in 1967. Although many Turkish leaders have since been to Africa, PM Erdogan became the

first prime minister to travel to the continent in 2005 and has since traveled the most extensively. In 2007, the MFA announced a plan to establish 10 new embassies and consulates in Africa this year and expects to open more in 2009. While the MFA has yet to decide where to put the new missions, reported Kumburoglu, Mali, Chad, Niger, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mozambique, Cameroon, and Tanzania are on the short list. The GOT has also stepped up multilateral engagement with Africa. In 2005, Turkey joined the African Union as an observer nation; at its January summit, the AU declared Turkey a "strategic partner." To further promote relations, the GOT will host a high-level "Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit" with the AU in Istanbul, August 18-21.

14. (C) Over the past 30 years, Turkey has signed a series of bilateral treaties with seven sub-Saharan African countries. Kumburoglu reported a vast majority are general cooperative agreements aimed at either enhancing bilateral trade or diplomatic relations. The exception is Ethiopia, with which the GOT has signed 29 agreements since 1993 including health care, civil aviation, and military initiatives. The question remains whether Turkey intends to use these agreements as anything other than symbols of close relations. South African Embassy officials told us that, despite pressuring the SAG to sign eight treaties in the last decade, the GOT has yet to operationalize any aside from the two directly impacting private business.

Economic Foothold

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15. (C) Facing a current account and trade deficit, the search for new markets has proceeded hand in hand with Turkey's enhanced political relations with sub-Saharan Africa. Kumburoglu reported the overall trade volume with the continent has expanded from USD 5.4 billion in 2003 to 13 billion in 2007; the GOT aims to increase the total to USD 25 billion by end of 2008. Turkish exports primarily include consumer electronics, textiles, chemicals, processed foodstuffs, and automotive components. Turkey imports raw materials, unprocessed food, leather, and gold. Recently, Turkey has also begun to look to Africa in its quest for alternative oil and gas sources. (It currently imports 1.4 bcm per year of liquefied natural gas from Nigeria, making it Turkey's largest regional trading partner.) Contrary to repeated MFA denials, energy analyst Faruk Demir told us that the GOT's primary interest in Sudan is energy-related. When Sudanese President Bashir visited Ankara in February, Demir reported, he submitted a list of political and economic demands and offered the GOT the "bad parts on the border with Chad" as an option for Turkish oil field development instead of the requested areas near Eritrea (reftel).

16. (C) More and more Turkish businesses are setting up shop in Africa. Over 100 Turkish companies operate in Sudan alone. Kumburoglu noted the majority are involved in construction, earning over USD 17.3 billion in 2005. Turkish firms have also made inroads into the engineering, textiles, and durable goods sectors. Turkish Airlines (THY) flies direct from Istanbul to Lagos, Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, and Capetown. The Turkish private sector, led by the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON), has taken great strides to create ties between Turkish and African business councils and chambers of commerce. In October 2007, TUSKON signed a bilateral cooperative agreement with the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Association (ECCA). Since 2006, TUSKON has hosted an annual Turkey-Africa Foreign Trade Bridge conference in Istanbul with the intention of bringing together Turkish and African businessmen and politicians for networking and developing "constructive cooperation between the state and civil society organizations." TUSKON expects more than 1,000 African businessmen from 54 countries to attend the 3rd conference on May 13-15.

¶7. (SBU) Although Turkey has traditionally focused its humanitarian and development assistance on Central Asia and the Balkans, Africa is the fastest growing recipient region for Turkish aid. Since 2005, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has provided humanitarian assistance to 32 sub-Saharan countries and opened regional Program Coordination Offices in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Senegal. TIKA President Musa Kulakikaya told us his organization has implemented 236 projects in Africa (including the Maghreb), totaling over USD 24.8 million in ¶2006. In 2007, the GOT donated USD 2 million to the World Food Program for emergency operations. Of the five geographic regions in which TIKA operates, however, Africa consistently receives the smallest share. (Note: TIKA includes NGO contributions, which are consistently larger than those of the GOT for Africa, in Turkey's overall foreign assistance calculations.) The region figures more prominently in Turkish NGO donations; Nigeria, the DRC, and Sudan constitute four of the top 15 international recipients of Turkish non-governmental aid. Outside of crisis relief, a majority of GOT and private-sector programs aim to create sustainable development through education and technical training, drinking water projects, and equipment donations, said Kumbaroglu. The GOT also provides vocational training in Turkey for African diplomats, health and agricultural officials, and police.

Peacekeepers and Military Partners -----

¶8. (C) Turkey has yet to establish a prominent military presence in Africa despite contributions to UN operations in Somalia (UNOSOM II), Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), the Ivory Coast (UNOCI), Sudan (UNMIS), Liberia (UNMIL), Darfur (UNAMID), and Burundi

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(BINUB), as well as the EUFOR DR Congo operation. Total numbers typically include fewer than 10 policemen with the exception of UNOSOM II, which Turkey commanded, and UNMIL. Turkey also deployed a C-130 cargo aircraft and 15-member crew to Libreville, Gabon between July and December 2006 to support UN humanitarian efforts in the DRC. Although Turkey has signed military cooperation framework agreements with Senegal and Ethiopia and is negotiating a third with Sudan, bilateral mil-mil engagement has yet to occur on the working level (reftel). Ethiopian CHOD General Yenus and South African Defense Minister Lekota have visited Turkey. Turkish Defense Minister Gonul traveled to Khartoum in November 2007. Despite media reports that the GOT has approved Sudanese Government requests to purchase arms, Kumbaroglu underscored that the GOT has no intention of selling military equipment to the GOS as long as Darfur is unresolved. He conceded though that Africa could potentially become a new market for the Turkish defense industry.

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